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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON CORRUPTION AND TRANSPARENCY,
MARCH 1, 2004

1. Editorial in San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "Tiempo" on 2/27 entitled "Transparency against corruption." "The visit of a delegation of Transparency International (TI) to Honduras, headed by its Vice-president, Ines Ospina, is an encouraging step in our fight against this threat, one of the main causes of our impoverishment."

"According to the latest evaluation on corruption of TI, Honduras occupies the last place in terms of corruption in Central America. This fact negatively affects our country, because it closes our doors to external financing and foreign investment, which are mainly driven by the confidence in a country, its authorities and institutions."

"Anticorruption efforts in Honduras are still weak, because, as the Vice-president of TI said, the fight against corruption is a challenge not only for national governments, but also for the legislatures, the justice system, the media, the private sector, and society as a whole."

"It was interesting to see that the main focus of Ospina's speech in a meeting with the media was the belief that some governmental authorities have that the publication of corruption indicators in Honduras harms our international reputation. It was reassuring to hear somebody actually saying that it's necessary to strengthen freedom of press and expression in Honduras, a human right that's been under serious attack recently."

2. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Herald" on 2/29 entitled "Transparency". "Recently, we have been visited by representatives of TI, who spoke to the top governmental authorities, among them the Supreme Court President and several Ministers. This was a smart and positive attitude, which is clearly different from what has happened in the past, when these visits were seen as very unpleasant."

"TI could see that there's been some progress, and they acknowledged that there's been some work to regain the confidence of the Honduran citizenship. However, there's still much to be done. This fight must be continuous and determined, we should never back off from this difficult undertaking, because corruption has undoubtedly grown, and it's found new ways to spread out."

"The negative impact of corruption isn't just related to the loss of material resources, it also affects public trust, which debilitates the democratic system. The ethical and moral grounds in which any society must be built upon are collapsing when justice is seen as selective and discriminatory."

"Evidently, there's a long way ahead: we have to bring to justice all those who have committed crimes against humanity, drug traffickers, money launderers, those who have caused the collapse of many private banks, and many other criminals."

"Without real civic participation, any efforts of this kind would just be futile."

Palmer